Interview with Carol Clendening Laise

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AMBASSADOR CAROL CLENDENING LAISE (BUNKER)

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[Note: This transcript has not been edited by Ambassador Laise.]

Q: Madam Ambassador, how did you become interested in foreign affairs?

LAISE: I graduated from American University on the eve of war. I studied at their School of Public Affairs and became deeply interested, because of the creative and pioneering work which that school was doing, in government, and public administration primarily. When I came out of school, I took the junior professional examination, one of the earliest ones that had been devised in an effort to upgrade government. I managed to pass it. I entered government basically as a result of the defense build-up as a junior professional officer working in the Civil Service Commission. That meant I worked primarily in personnel work, both setting up a placement system as well as working on personnel utilization with defense industries in order to reduce staff turnover. After the war was over, this led me to be posted to UNRRA London.

Q: Could you explain what UNRRA is?

LAISE: It was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. It was the first major effort of the Allies to help in two areas, one in relief with supplies for our Allies who had been devastated in Europe by the war, and also to tackle the problem of all the displaced persons who had been shipped around and made homeless as a result of the war. It was a temporary organization set up prior to the establishment of the United Nations. When it was known when the United Nations was established and the specialized agencies, the functions of UNRRA would either be wound up or transferred to the U. N.

Basically, I went over to help wind up the European regional office in 1946. I was there from 1946 to 1948 and that is when I became interested in the new institutions that were being developed to help keep world peace.

Q: I think it's interesting to take a look for a minute at an organization such as this. What type of work were you doing with UNRRA?

LAISE: I was involved primarily in personnel, first helping to [develop] a more efficient method of processing returning people coming through London, and then as Assistant Director of Personnel in UNRRA London.

Q: What type of people were we getting at that point?

LAISE: Of course, it was an international organization. My impression was that a lot had been taken out of the Army. There were a number of women who had been in social work in the United States where we were far more advanced and did outstanding work. I guess I got a particularly good view of this because the operation that I was in charge of when I first went there was to terminate people. I particularly took on dealing with cases of misconduct because it involved appeal and the legal system in England. I am aware of the fact that the post-war conditions were very conducive to black-marketeering and to corruption. I am sure some of that occurred in UNRRA, in fact I know it did. Equally, there was some very heroic work done in UNRRA, both in running the D.P. camps, the

displaced persons camps, as well as trying to help our Allies back on their feet before the Marshall Aid.

Q: This was actually your first overseas experience, and you were very much involved in some of the reestablishment of the world after the war. Did this lead you to go to Washington?

LAISE: I came back to Washington as a result of the experience I was having and the cooperation I had developed with people in the State Department in trying to discharge the functions of turning the activities over to the successor organization. It just followed naturally that I came back and joined the Bureau of the United Nations Affairs and helped to look after U. S. interests in the U. N. and the specialization—

Q: This was in 1948 when you came back. What type of work were you doing? Was that called I. O. at that time in the Department?

LAISE: No, it was called the Bureau of the United Nations Affairs.

Q: It later became I. O., which means International Organizations. What was the Bureau's main interest at that point and what were you doing?

LAISE: The Assistant Secretary at that time was Dean Rusk. Basically, it had divisions that were responsible for developing our position papers for our participation in all of the U. N. organizations and the specialized agencies. Actually, they also did other international organizations. That's why the name was changed, I think.

Q: Yes, including the International Telegraph and Telephone and the postal services, and all those other ones.

LAISE: The OAS, the Organization of American States—I went on a delegation to help set up the international authority of the Ruhr. That was one of the things that we did. I was in the section dealing with the organizational problems, and particularly the financing

problems [which] required U. S. support and contribution. This meant that I was serving in a dual role. I would go to the United Nations and to two specialized agencies in particular, UNESCO and WHO, and would serve on their budget committees and analyze their budgets, demand justifications for their expenditures, and to relate the budgetary aspect to our program and political goals in all of these organizations.

On the one hand, I was serving on the appropriations committee of these international organizations as U. S. advisor because the delegate usually was a member of Congress. It was our task when these conferences were over to come back and justify our participation before the Congress as well as our contributions to these international organizations. This meant one had to know everything they were doing and explain how we were spending the money.

Q: This is, in part, a reflection of the experience of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, wasn't it, and not bringing members of the Senate with him to the Versailles Conference setting up the League of Nations? We vowed that would never happen again.

LAISE: Yes. I spent seven years on the Bureau of United Nations Affairs before I transferred to bilateral diplomacy. It was an extremely good education because, obviously, as you can imagine, the budget process and the appropriations process is the institutional center and control point of these organizations. You have to know what they're doing and what our interests are. Basically, during the period of time I was there, and I think from the very beginning, as you say, [there was] a desire to get the Congress involved. Every year there were two congressional members on the delegation to these organizations. It alternated between the Senate and the House. Inevitably, the congressional delegate was the main spokesman for the U. S. in the budget committee.

Q: Let me break this down because I think the interaction here can be very illuminating. In the first place, how did you find the staff of the United Nations that you were dealing with

in the budgetary process? Were they looking to the United States to overly support us or were they realistic?

LAISE: In those days the International Secretariat who was a very dedicated group of people, international civil servants. It seemed to me that they were both in UNESCO and in the U. N. There were U. S. citizens who were very prominent in that part of the operation and who were very responsible. The problem they were constantly facing was the tremendous pressure from the developing world to undertake programs that were costly.

Naturally, it was not the Secretariat but in the budget committee itself composed of government representatives that there was the feeling that the United States should bear a larger proportion of the cost because of our GNP and our wealth, etc. The division of the contributions was always of subject of considerable amount of controversy and the United States started out contributing more than 33-l/3% of the whole. During my time we got it down to 33-l/3%. I think subsequently it went down to 25%, and I guess that's about where it is today.

We also developed other ways of financing voluntary programs so that things that we were interested in and that required money, such as peacekeeping or technical assistance, they were financed on a voluntary basis and not on a levied contribution.

Q: You found that you were dealing with a very professional staff in the United Nations.

LAISE: At that time.

Q: Do you remember who some of the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives were who came? Who were they and how did they react to this? This was something very new and it was an odd sharing of the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch getting together on something like this.

LAISE: In those days, again because it was a much more hopeful period, it usually was an educational process that enlisted understanding and support on the part of the delegates who participated. John Sherman Cooper, Henry Cabot Lodge, Hugh Scott, Senator Fulbright were the senators that I remember.

Q: Two of them became ambassadors and Hugh Scott was renowned as a scholar of China, wasn't he? Fulbright, of course, led the Foreign Relations Committee for many years.

LAISE: On the House side there was John Vorys, Richards, and Wayne Hayes. Those are the ones I remember.

Q: Of those, the one that sticks out in my mind is Wayne Hayes who became quite a problem throughout the government, not only because of the way he personally operated but also his attitude which was rather arbitrary and dictatorial. Did you have problems with him?

LAISE: No.

Q: Did these men come looking upon the United Nations and the State Department support staff as, initially, an adversarial situation, that they were going to clean up the mess?

LAISE: No, I didn't have that experience at all.

Q: Of course, this was a time when we felt all things could be done. It was a very optimistic era.

LAISE: That's right. Yes.

Q: Within the State Department, how did the Bureau of United Nations Affairs, which later became International Organizations, fit from your perspective? Did it have much clout or

was this something that was going on as in the normal European Bureau, Near Eastern Africa Bureau, sort of dragged, kicking and screaming to give you support?

LAISE: My impression, and I had to deal with the geographic bureaus in clearing papers, etc., was that in those days, both because of the nature of the problems and because of the very able people who had been recruited into the Bureau of United Nations Affairs —obviously, the Foreign Service had pretty well dwindled during the war and it was not in a position to staff these new functions. People like Willard Thorp, Dean Rusk, Ernie Gross, Marshall Shulman, and Harding Bancroft who became the editor of the New York Times, were extremely able people and they certainly had support. I don't know that they had so much support from Dean Acheson because he always took a rather dim view of people's expectations of the U. N. He thought they were highly inflated, as indeed they were. He was quite realistic in saying that this was nothing more than an organization of sovereign nations and they can't do anything more than sovereign nations agree to do. It is not supra-national at all. Therefore, to have expectations [of] the United Nations doing things that the governments wouldn't agree to do was unrealistic. I think his approach was mainly to offset the unrealism on the one side.

Q: Can you think of any particular problem which involved you in this period?

LAISE: I suppose the most difficult problem was during the McCarthy period bringing the international organizations around to within their policies to a recognition that we were going to insist on security clearance by our nationals who were hired by them and to work out a procedure that was responsive to our concerns on the one hand, and yet respecting the right of the international organization to have the final hiring authority.

Q: How did you work this out?

LAISE: By negotiation with the heads of the organization and I was involved in it. It entailed a lot of people, particularly legal people.

Q: We're talking about the Sons of Joseph McCarthy period when there were great alarms and excursions about communist influence. I'm sure the United Nations was a particular bone of contention or point of interest.

LAISE: UNESCO more than the United Nations.

Q: Were quite a few Americans either taken out of the United Nations or kept from getting into it or UNESCO?

LAISE: In terms of its impact on individuals, I don't remember. I think some of them had a rough time, but whether it was sorted out or not, I just don't remember.

Q: You wouldn't have been involved in the fighting for individuals cases or something like that?

LAISE: No. It was just the policy end of it.

Q: You joined the Foreign Service at some point.

LAISE: I transferred into the Foreign Service in 1955 and in 1956 I went to Delhi.

Q: How did this assignment come about?

LAISE: In large part because of my interest in going to Asia and, quite frankly, having had considerable experience negotiating with other nationals in the United Nations and in UNESCO, I was conscious of where a woman could be effective and where she couldn't. India seemed to me to be a place that, first of all, I was interested in and, secondly, I had had very satisfactory dealings with the Indian delegates in all the organizations. They had the background of British administrative experience and so it was easy. Their concepts were not strange and it was easy to negotiate with them.

Q: In my small dealings with Indians—I've never served there—I've found them absolutely maddening when you try to pin them down on certain points. They probably felt the same towards me.

LAISE: I must tell you another factor which was that the UNESCO conference was convening in Delhi in 1956 and the Department was persuaded that it made sense that I should go out for that and then stay on.

Q: In 1956 how did you see American interests in India at the time? What were our concerns there?

LAISE: I arrived during the period of the Eisenhower Administration and, obviously John Foster Dulles didn't have much use for neutrals. I think things were changing, attitudes were changing in Washington, about the time that I went out. There was a very great interest in the United States in seeing a democratic country with the potential that India had succeed in its efforts and development along democratic lines as a model, in contrast to the communist Chinese.

Q: Were the embassies briefed to bring these neutral Indians to realize the value of joining the United States in an anti-communist front?

LAISE: No, I'm saying that that period had seemed to me to have passed because with the leadership of ambassadors such as Ambassador Cooper and Ambassador Bunker and the evolution of perception of our interest, there was greater willingness to accept the fact that a non-aligned country wasn't necessarily against us and surely it was far less costly than being aligned with it.

Q: You were there from 1956 to 1961 and you went to the political section. What were your responsibilities in the political section?

LAISE: Initially, it was for reporting on internal political developments which, of course, was very interesting. I used to attend the Congress Party sessions.

Q: This is the Indian Congress Party.

LAISE: Yes. I would follow the domestic political scene mainly because the question existed then, as it still does, as to whether or not India would be able to survive as a united country and was it politically and economically viable. There was a great interest back here in Washington in knowing how they dealt with internal conflicts and what the emerging problems were that would lead to what the Indians called the vociferous tendencies to overwhelm the stability of the Indian state.

Q: These interviews are designed for people who are interested in American foreign affairs but perhaps don't know too much about how we operate. Here you are, a political officer in a tumultuous democracy, a huge country. How did you operate?

LAISE: Basically, I developed relationships and attended open party meetings to maintain an insight into where the balance of power was, what the underlying issues were, and how serious the language problem was. After all, they had parliament there and so one cultivated relationships with members of parliament to get their insight into how all these problems were being dealt with. We in the Embassy attended national events which would give us further insights such as at the Congress Party meetings. I knew officials of the Congress Party fairly well, but since we had consulates with political officers in other parts of India, we didn't try to follow the details in Bombay or Madras or Calcutta because our consulates followed that. Essentially, we factored those perceptions into a national perception reports that we did regularly, and particularly at the time approaching elections.

Q: When you say “cultivate,” how does one cultivate a relationship of this nature?

LAISE: Indians are very open and willing to talk. The best and most useful of doing it is to go and call on them or invite them around to your house for tea or coffee. That's a

much more popular way of social interaction, at least among the Indians I'm talking about where you are basically dealing with members of parliament, than with what we usually think of in terms of evening social occasions. Also, India had a very extensive press. The Indian journalists were extremely informative. I remember the ambassador used to hold periodic and regular informal press conferences with the Indian press just to keep them informed of the U. S. policies and to explain to them questions they had so that before issues grew up between us, they the background. I always attended those. Because India is an open country and a democracy, between the press, the members of parliament, and then traveling in the consular district which Delhi covered—the state government that I was most familiar with was the Punjab which now, as you know, is the source of great problems in India.

Q: There is a separatist Sikh movement going on there.

LAISE: At that time, while the Sikhs were very prominent in local politics, they had not split off from the center.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Krishna Menon who was the stormy petrel of Indian politics who drove various administrations up the wall? At one point, he was Minister of Defense.

LAISE: Yes, he was. I did, indeed, know Krishna Menon mainly because I knew him here at the U. N. before I went to India. His attitude was extremely interesting. When I first met him in India, he asked me whether I was a political appointee or a career Foreign Service officer. I said that I was a career Foreign Service officer, after which he had nothing to do with me. He thought we were useless, that the bureaucrats were not ones that he could successfully exercise his charms on. He just didn't think much of professionals.

Q: Were there any other figures who were prominent at the time that you dealt with particularly?

LAISE: I knew Mrs. Gandhi. At that point when I was there she was simply the daughter of the prime minister. I got to know some of the old Congress Party leaders who had helped in the independence movement. [One of them] was also a member of parliament and was a neighbor of mine [and his name was] Acharya Kripalani. He appears in the film on Gandhi. He was a prominent Gandhi-ite.

A member of the opposition I knew quite well was Minoo Masani. After I came back to the Division of South Asian Affairs, I arranged trips for both leaders and delegations of the parliament and grew to know them.

I guess the person I knew best was the president of India because I had known him in UNESCO. That was Rajendra Prasad.

Q: How did some of these figures feel about the United States? What was their attitude? It had moved away from a confrontational policy but it was not a very close relationship.

LAISE: It's been a prickly relationship all along, perhaps because we have a lot of things in common. [Laughter] It's not easy for two democracies, two large one, to get along with each other very well. Both of us are sensitive to criticism and that makes it difficult. Basically, I felt that Indians have always had a friendly feeling about the United States, but we have gone on several swings of the pendulum. During the period of the Chinese attack on the Indians in 1962 at the same time as the Cuban missile crisis, I was recalled by Galbraith to India to help out because I did know so many prominent Indians and the embassy had just turned over. He needed as many people to establish contact as he could. President Radhakrishnan was one. He was president at that time. General Thimayya was one of the chiefs of the Army staff that I knew quite well. I had many contacts that he needed at that point, so I went back. The interesting thing was that the Indians then were saying, “Oh, for John Foster Dulles,” because here they were under attack by a communist—

Q: This was the border war where the Chinese had taken quite a bit of territory and the Indians had not fared very well.

LAISE: They didn't take a lot of territory. They invaded, but much to the astonishment of the Indians and not to the astonishment of our Chinese analysts,—when I arrived in November of 1962, the Indians were certain they were coming down to Calcutta. They were in a panic, but instead, the Chinese having made their point, withdrew beyond the McMahon line. They didn't take any territory, but at that point India was wanting the United States to be so anti-communist that we would pour a lot of military equipment in to India. We were much more measured in our response, (a) because our estimate of the Chinese threat was different from theirs, and (b) because of the effect in Pakistan. At that point the United States was responsive, and Kennedy was seen as very sympathetic to the Indian cause.

Then things went backward again during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. I was in Nepal at the time, but the Indians have never forgiven us for sending the aircraft carrier “Enterprise” into the Bay of Bengal. The Indian ambassador in Kathmandu, who again was a very old friend, a very distinguished Indian, said he never, in his wildest dreams, thought the United States would threaten India, and this would never be forgotten.

Q: Going back to the time that you were in India, 1956 to 1961, how was the embassy viewing Pakistan?

LAISE: That was a period in our relationship where our embassies in Pakistan and India were working in team work. It was also a period when the relationships between India and Pakistan were not so strained. You see, the Chinese first moved into Indian-claimed territory in the west, not the east, in 1962, but the disputed territory in the northwest area of India, the Chinese had moved in. When the Indians discovered it—this was in 1959—Krishna Menon came immediately to Ellsworth as ambassador and made an urgent request for airplanes to get supplies up to the area to get them better prepared and to

establish a presence there to reinforce their claims, because they didn't know what the Chinese were going to do. The United States did respond with planes very quickly. This was a period of our relationship with India.

Also it was a harmonious one in our handling of the Tibetan refugees. You see, 1959 was also the time that the Dalai Lama came across and the Tibetan refugees began to come in large numbers. The Indians initially were very leery of our helping because they were afraid we would turn it into an anti-communist exercise, beat the drums, etc. They obviously wanted to assist the refugees and keep native Tibetans friendly to the south rather than to the Chinese. We had a common goal, but they simply didn't want to beat the drums on the whole matter. At that time they did not know whether they could ever bring the Chinese around to reconciliation on the border issue.

During that period of time we did assist a great deal in Tibetan relief, but we did it very quietly through private organizations and did it in a way that the Indians appreciated. It didn't appear as though we were trying to over-trump them. So our relationship in that period of time with managing third-country problems, i.e., Tibet and Pakistan, I think was a reasonably harmonious one.

Q: The ambassador during that time was Ellsworth Bunker most of the time you were there. Aside from the fact that he later became your husband and looking at it as a Foreign Service officer, how did he operate? Each ambassador operates quite differently, and Ellsworth Bunker is one of the major figures in American diplomacy.

LAISE: As in all of his diplomatic assignments, his hallmark was to take his time, set his own pace, and develop the trust and confidence with the leadership throughout India, because he traveled quite a lot. He was there four years. He had the reputation of being absolutely clear and honest in reporting his government's views and not softening them to what the government might like to hear. Equally, he was considered sympathetic to the Indian situation and that, therefore, they could count on him to report back to this

government accurately as well. His method was one of interest of building everything, as one Indian said to me, “a person without sides,” so that they knew that he wasn't saying one thing to one individual and another thing to another individual, one thing to their government and another thing to our own government. They knew that he was dependable in representing them to the United States and the United States to them. He didn't have to prove himself.

Q: I always think of Ambassador Bunker, for whom I worked at one time when I was in Saigon where he was ambassador, as being someone who takes his time but is very solid, a good Vermonter. I think of the Indians as being rather volatile, of being more emotional and moving back and forth. Wasn't this a play in contrast, or was it, that in actually with the Indians on a diplomatic basis, a much more solid way?

LAISE: Let's not forget that the Indians, particularly in government and with whom he was dealing, were very much influenced by their experience with the British and their education with the British. Most of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers and some of the politicians and Nehru himself had been educated in England. There was a tendency to see America through English eyes which meant we were that loud and noisy but charming—there was a bit of a feeling of looking down their noses. They respected the British aristocracy and the British reserve. Another aspect of that respect was a lot of tolerance on the part of the British of this volatility you mentioned and of the criticisms. After all, anybody who is brought up and served in the Oxford Union or the London School of Economics, enjoys the exchange and criticism and sharpness of the dialectical process. So they developed this with the British and the British are very tolerant of it but we aren't. [Laughter] Ellsworth is, so he was basically seen as one of America's aristocrats who could see all these things in perspective and was tolerant of their idiosyncrasies and mistakes, and he didn't hold it against them. He did just fine, the noblesse of British worked very well. [Laughter]

Q: You returned and went to the Senior Seminar, which is a State Department's equivalent of the War College from 1961 to 1962. Then you became the Deputy Director of the Office of South Asian Affairs from 1961 to 1966.

LAISE: Yes, and I was Director during the last few years.

Q: The jurisdictions keep changing. What did South Asian Affairs mean?

LAISE: To make it simple, we called them “the panic countries,” Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ceylon, India and Nepal. [Laughter]

Q: What were your particular responsibilities?

LAISE: The division was responsible in Washington for backstopping our embassies in those countries and for formulating and drafting instructions and guidance to them in dealing with the problems that came up affecting our relations in those countries. We were the central coordinating and policy formulation point for both operational and policy issues relating to those countries. Since in those countries we had large programs of military and economic aid as well as intelligence operations, the necessity for coordinating our responses to embassy initiatives and for initiating instructions to our embassies had to be cleared with a large number of agencies. So there were inter-agency committees of which we were members and very often chaired them, depending on the subject matter. The point is processing all that flows into the department and flows out of the department in relation to those countries.

Q: In this period from 1962 to 1966, what were American interests in that area?

LAISE: Our interests are what they had been all along, trying to contribute to greater cooperation between India and Pakistan. We were seeking to develop a regional stability. It was also during this period in 1962 that we assisted the Indians against the Chinese and the Pakistanis saw that as strengthening India against Pakistan. Our relations with

Pakistan began to drift apart under the initiative of Mr. Bhutto and he began to flirt with China. This led to an estrangement between us and Pakistan in 1965 to the point that, when President Ayub was to make a visit here, President Johnson postponed it literally on the eve of his visit. Then in order not to seem to favor Pakistan, he also postponed the Indian visit which was to be four months later. The Pakistanis saw this as very threatening, didn't understand it, and of course, felt that it was the Chinese relationship that was the cause of the problem. I think President Johnson's reasons were quite complex but essentially it boiled down to the fact that he didn't want leaders who were heavily dependent on us for economic assistance coming to the United States and criticizing our posture in Vietnam.

Q: Did this come as a bolt out of the blue?

LAISE: Yes, it came as a bolt out of the blue.

Q: How did the bureau handle this?

LAISE: We protested but it was like one was only talking to the dialogue of the death, I guess. I think it derived from the fact, as one pieces it together—I don't know whether there was a sequential relationship, but I think there was—Lester Pearson had been here and right on our own back yard had criticized our role in Vietnam and Johnson just was furious. Then he saw these two leaders coming and the notion they'd come and criticize us. When the Congress was in session, he was supposed to be getting economic aid for them and they criticize us in Vietnam. It didn't appeal to him at all, so he just said, “Nothing doing.” [Laughter]

It was following that—we not only in the case of Pakistan postponed the visit but we also postponed the meeting of the consortium on AID. Following that was when Pakistan began, under Bhutto's urging, to make trouble, first in the Rann of Kutch and the British mediated that successfully.

Q: This is trouble with the Indians.

LAISE: Yes. I think Bhutto was elated because he then had succeeded in getting international intervention in one of their disputes with India, and so he tried the same thing in Kashmir. The Indians reacted as they always said they would in a place of their own choosing. They really clobbered the Pakistanis. That was the 1965 war. The United States response was to cut off aid to both. Here were two countries to whom we were contributing a great deal of aid who were at war with each other. We just cut off aid to both of them.

Managing the U. S. interests in the case of a war was a very demanding task. I am proud to say that we did it without having to set up a task force in the operations center [Laughter]. We set up a task force, all right, but it was all run from South Asian Affairs.

Q: Sometimes this is so much better because you have the people who really know. In the India- Pakistan equation, at that time were there any particular pressures on us internally in the United States from different groups who were wanting us to "tilt towards Pakistan" or "tilt towards India," such as the military, CIA, or groups within Congress? Were you feeling pressures there or could you deal with this in isolation?

LAISE: Not in isolation, but Bhutto was regarded as the Krishna Menon of Pakistan. He now made a martyr's name for himself and so that draws a curtain over what, in fact, he actually was. I think that that diluted a lot of the sympathy which tends to be here in the military or in Congress for the Pakistanis because diplomacy is so much better than the Indians. [Laughter]

Q: You are saying the Pakistanis have better diplomats.

LAISE: They had been better diplomats here in the practice of diplomacy.

Q: I suppose it's somewhat the underdog and not all the messy squabbling that you usually get from the Indian side sometimes?

LAISE: I think I'd have to canvass the Congress, but I think the feeling that they're easier to deal with and more like us. At that time Ayub was the president and President Johnson really liked Ayub, but because of the various cross-currents that were operating at that time, I don't recollect that there were any special groups making a special plea for one or the other.

Q: Did you find our absorption in Vietnam, which after all was a neighbor there, play a major role in how we reacted to the subcontinent at the time?

LAISE: It may have shaped some of our attitudes toward India because India was on the International Commission and were not always helpful.

Q: The International Commission at that time was India, Canada and Poland, and so the general feeling was that the Canadians were trying to play the game, the Indians were using it to stick knives into us, and the Poles were doing their intelligence work. [Laughter]

LAISE: That's right.

Q: What about the American military? Pakistan had come into SEATO at the time which was a surprise because it really didn't have much of a role in Southeast Asian affairs and was somewhat removed from SEATO. Was this important or is it just in name that it was in SEATO?

LAISE: Was it in SEATO? It was in CENTO wasn't it? I've totally forgotten.

Q: It probably speaks for the fact that it wasn't very significant. In your inter-agency meetings, did you find the Department of Defense leaned more towards Pakistan mainly because they think like us or they seem more friendly?

LAISE: I didn't have any experience with that myself because the main dealings with Defense were with ISA and that was the civilian State Department branch of Defense.

When the military came out to India when we did start military assistance to India under Kennedy, they were very professional and performed very well. I myself didn't have any experience in inter-agency meetings where there seemed to be a total roadblock because of the military attitude.

Q: You were in South Asian Affairs at the death of Nehru. Was this going to change India? How did we see it at the time?

LAISE: I think we were fairly confident that India had sufficiently established a democratic tradition that they would survive the transition, as indeed they did. I do think that we often wrote papers on, “After Nehru, What?” I remember when we were the embassy in Delhi, we used to try to look into the crystal ball to see what would happen. I don't think we ever foresaw that Mrs. Gandhi would gain the strength that she did when she got the job and dominate the national scene to the extent that she did. I really now can't cast back and think what our attitude was then except that we expected that there would be an orderly transition, but we certainly had natural questions about the ability of the leadership left in India after Nehru's death to garner a national image and a national support. The mantle fell on Shastri who was Home Minister and quite able, but he certainly didn't have a whole lot of charisma and he didn't last very long. Then Mrs. Gandhi came—

Q: He died of a heart attack.

LAISE: Yes, in Tashkent when the Soviets were mediating a peace treaty between India and Pakistan, ending the 1965 war. He died in January of 1966.

Q: You said that you knew Mrs. Gandhi when she was just the daughter of Prime Minister Nehru. Did you have many dealings with her or was she just a figure off to one side?

LAISE: No, I would see her at Congress Party meetings and I knew the role that she was discharging in the women's side of the Congress Party meeting. I used to see her there, but then I'd see her socially in Delhi as a woman in the American Embassy. I think

we were the same age and we had almost the same birthdays. She seemed to take an interest in my activities, so we would occasionally meet tea at the ambassador's and I would see her at very social occasions. That was about it.

Then when she became the Indian delegate to the UNESCO Executive Board, she wrote me several times in that connection because she knew of my connection with UNESCO. It was rather casual, certainly not close.

Q: You were taken out of Washington and sent back to India during the Chinese-Indian war and, you said, for your connections. What were you actually doing? This would be 1965, 1966.

LAISE: I guess you would say Special Assistant to the Ambassador, trying to set up appointments and get people in touch. I would also keep him informed, as his eyes and ears, about the reaction of Indian leaders concerning what was going on, by virtue of my ability to see them socially and through friendships.

Q: This was Ambassador Galbraith. How did he treat the officers in the embassy?

LAISE: He has always been a strong supporter of the Foreign Service, as far as I know.

Q: How did he get along with the Indians at the time you observed him there?

LAISE: Again, this was a different equation, but they always admired an intellectual and a professor. He didn't have to cultivate personal relationships. He had it when he went there by his reputation. He had spent a time in India with Mahalanobis and a number of the Indian economists, so he was well known as a very distinguished economist and intellectual in the United States. They were flattered by his appointment and they knew he had connections with Kennedy. That is what mattered most to them. They'd take anything from him. [Laughter]

Q: Dean Rusk, during the time you were with the Bureau of Southeastern Affairs, was the Secretary of State. Did he intrude much or was his eye pretty well fixed on Vietnam? Did you feel the hand of Dean Rusk there?

LAISE: Yes. When we were trying to sort out things with Pakistan and the 1965 war, he was very much involved.

Q: How did he feel about the Indian-Pakistan war?

LAISE: He just shook his head in bewilderment that two countries who had so much need for economic development and the betterment of their people, would squander their resources in warring against each other. It was just incomprehensible.

Q: Within the desks dealing with India and Pakistan at the director level, were there any personalities that were strongly pro-Indian or pro-Pakistani that you felt were on one side or the other?

LAISE: No, I think we had extremely good officers who were balanced in their point of view about U. S. interests and yet did justice to the interests of the country that they were dealing with. Bruce Laingen was the Pakistan desk officer and David Schneider was the India desk officer. David had served in Pakistan as well as India. I don't think that Bruce had. Bruce had served in Iran and he was a very balanced officer. In an effort to try to work these things out, I think basically we had more balanced positions in the department than we did in our embassies because after Galbraith left India, Chester Bowles went back with Walter McConaughy in Pakistan. Each were so partisan that essentially we couldn't get very much help from there.

Q: This is one of the things that often the bureau has to play an important role in that there is a “disease” in the Foreign Service of “local-itis.” An embassy, particularly in the case of

a war between another country, can develop a case of "local-itis" or at least report on how it's seen from there. It's up to the bureau to bring these two together.

LAISE: I think that's perfectly normal. I don't see anything the matter with it. I know it's called "local-itis." The extreme form of "local-itis" is when you don't tell it the way it is, you tell it the way it will reflect best on the country to which you are credited. Basically, you have to rely on the embassy to report honestly what serves our interests in that country. If they modify it or downplay it because they don't think it will be welcome news back in Washington, then you simply don't know how to do the trade-offs back in Washington in terms of our interests because you don't know how much weight to give. You may give wrong weight on the basis of inaccurate reporting from the embassy.

Q: This might make a modern reference to the problems in Central America now where so much is leaked. As an outsider now, I find myself very suspicious about anything that would come out of there mainly because of the concerns of how it will be played back in Washington. There are real repercussions. The worst case, of course, was back in the post-war years on China where the people who reported it straight on the conditions in China were basically driven out of the Foreign Service.

LAISE: Right.

Q: Did you find any in this because these were two nations to which we were friendly and were fighting? Did the White House or National Security Council have any concern for this?

LAISE: I think that President Johnson was very much involved. The thing where he was strongest was to support the notion of seeking the cease fire through the U. N. When the Russians stepped up to that and offered to mediate the thing, he was delighted. He recognized that our interests coincided in the sense of going to stop the fighting and want the two countries to get together. He was quite happy that the Russians get involved.

Q: There weren't people saying, “We don't want to give the Russians an entr#e, and no matter what they want to do, no.”

LAISE: No, his was exactly the opposite. “They want to do it, let them do it.” [Laughter]

Q: How about in the State Department? Were there noises about this?

LAISE: No, I don't think so. I think it was recognized that we certainly would not get any kudos out of it and would probably get damaged. [Laughter] Therefore, if the Russians could do it, let them try.

Q: Now we move to 1966 when you were appointed ambassador to Nepal. How did this come about?

LAISE: The White House took the initiative because Lyndon Johnson wanted to increase the number of women ambassadors and no nonsense about it. Since that was in my area, it was thought that it would be a good place to send me.

Q: What were our interests in Nepal at the time?

LAISE: It was mainly contributing to their economic development in a way that would enhance regional stability, being a buffer state between India and China. We have since seen that, if a buffer state fails to play that role, you can get into a lot of trouble in Afghanistan and a lot of trouble it creates in terms of instability in the area. The feeling was that it was important for Nepal to maintain its independence and reduce the possibility of a conflict between India and China in Nepal.

Q: When did you arrive in Nepal?

LAISE: Early December 1966.

Q: How did you find the embassy there?

LAISE: It was first class. My deputy was Harry Barnes, who later became ambassador to India, Chile, and Romania. We had a very strong AID mission with some very able there as well and extensive Peace Corps [activity].

Q: How was our Peace Corps and AID program? What were they doing and how effective were they?

LAISE: I felt that our AID program was well run. It had good leadership. Because we were using block Indian rupees largely, it meant that we could be responsive to local needs rather than often having to follow the dictates of domestic interests in the United States which might not be appropriate. It was really related to the local needs and, I think, did a great deal to expand the educational system of Nepal, to develop its agricultural programs. Nepal in those days was feeding itself. It was mainly in the field of agriculture and health. We eliminated malaria working with the WHO and the government. I think we did sound and sensible programs in the AID field because you were starting from scratch. There was one school in Kathmandu in 1950, no universities, and no vocational education. Disease was rampant and family welfare just didn't exist. I think we have had quite sensible programs of AID.

The Peace Corps contributed enormously to it because it's the country in which the Peace Corps had an appropriate role. It is a very rugged country that doesn't have a lot of effective administrative controls extending throughout the country. The Peace Corps was willing to go out and live in these very deprived conditions and really got very attached to the people and to the efforts that were being made to assist them. They really did, it seemed to me, make a contribution. For example, I remember talking to some of the roads people. Some of the projects my husband approved when he was also ambassador to Nepal ten years before I got there were dedicated when I was there. In other words the foot bridges over some of the rivers that would enable communication and transportation during the monsoon period, on foot admittedly. The rivers would become so high during the monsoons that, unless you had bridges, you couldn't get across. It was thought

at the time in the late 1950s that we could appropriately provide bridges to improve communication and transportation and, ultimately, the administrative system in Nepal.

I asked when I dedicated several of these why it had taken so long. Of course, from an AID point of view, they were sitting down in a field painted over to prevent rusting. This was an example of a horrible waste. Well it wasn't a horrible waste. It just took time to organize the administrative underpinnings and the means of getting those things in place. First of all, they didn't have any statistics to determine—there were a limited number of bridges—where the need the greatest. There wasn't enough political structure for even political pressure to make a determination of that sort. So they had to improve their administrative structure to find out where most appropriately they could be used. Then the means of organizing local labor to help install these things. You couldn't take everybody up in Kathmandu to do it. That's where the Peace Corps came in. They were the local catalysts for helping organize local labor to contribute local labor that was needed to install these things.

My perception, at any rate, is that the Peace Corps has had a real role to perform in Nepal where it has not necessarily in some other countries.

Q: This is my impression, too. What type of government did you have to deal with in Nepal in the capital of Kathmandu when you were there?

LAISE: The same as it is today. The king rules. In the days when I was there he preferred to retreat behind the scene and exercise his power more indirectly as far as the public was concerned and tried to thrust the government into the front spot to take charge and also to deal with us and the other countries as well as the AID donors, etc. Basically, the father of the present king was much more preferred to strengthen his government so that, while he was the ultimate arbiter which was well known, he didn't seek to be front actor.

Q: Who was the kind you dealt with?

LAISE: Mahendra. He died while I was there and the present king came into power, but he wasn't crowned until three years later. I had already left but I went back on the delegation. This king, more impatient, wanted to do things and he had a lot of young technocrats around him. He didn't have the patience to work behind the scenes. He got more directly involved ruling.

Q: How effective did you find the government?

LAISE: We invested a lot of money during the period of our AID mission and program there as we did in India, in community development and in trying to enlarge the participation in the government. This was based on the theory that people get involved in their own fate and future. They enlist their cooperation which you have to if you are going to provide the initiative for getting things done. We had a lot of rural development projects aimed at this, but they eventually dwindled in effectiveness, although in theory the monarch wants to decentralize and push the responsibilities down to where the people are. If they still want to keep control and prevent things from getting out of hand as they see it politically, and they pull in the reigns all the time, then people won't stick their necks out and simply will not be independent. They'll wait for the directives to come down from higher authority before they'll do anything.

Q: Did you have any feeling that the king was trying to use the United States as a counterbalance between China and India?

LAISE: There's no question that the king and, indeed, the government of Nepal attach#s importance to the United States presence there as a balancing factor in their struggle to keep going and to be able to deal with the counter pressures of India and China.

Q: Did you get involve in any sort of Chinese-Indian pressure problems when you were there?

LAISE: What happened while I was there, the warning that I kept getting from the Nepalese when I went there was, “Don't look at us through Indian eyes.” We were perceived to be cooperating with the Indians, as indeed we were. We could have used all our PL 480 rupees in the development process without the Indian cooperation. Our goal at that time was very much to prevent development of Chinese communism in Nepal, and so was India's after India and China split. That tended to put India and ourselves in a position of common interest in Nepal. The Nepalese saw it that way and they were very much afraid that we were basically willing to be led by India. They wanted us to deal with them as an independent factor.

Then when Nixon went to China in 1971, this simply confirmed in the Nepalese mind that we were more open to understanding their problem, but it certainly confirmed in the Indian mind that we were no longer on the same side, so to speak.

Q: Did you get warning beforehand in order to tell the king that we were on our way?

LAISE: No. It was a shock to everybody. This also was 1971 and one doesn't know how much the tilt to Pakistan had to do with the fact that Pakistan was helping us in this China move. Nobody knew anything about it. I think Nixon or Kissinger—I don't know which one—had just been in India, went to Pakistan, and then he went to China.

I remember saying to the Indian ambassador, “I hope to heaven he told Mrs. Gandhi what was going on before he left.”

He said, “I hope so, too.”

But he didn't. So it was a real clap of thunder to the Indians. The combination of this plus the Bangladesh war in which we tilted toward Pakistan—

Q: What did we actually do or is it just verbal?

LAISE: The thing that was most threatening as far as the Indians were concerned was sending the aircraft carrier Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal. That was the symbol of how far we were prepared to go to take on India. Actually, my understanding is that we really weren't thinking of India so much as getting a message to the Soviets over the Indian head. Of course, the Indians saw it as entirely aimed at them.

Q: We sent an aircraft carrier in at the time of a war, where the Indian would perceive this and yet it was somebody's bright idea in Washington that This would be a good way of giving a show of force to the Soviets. This is when geopolitics goes mad. It sounds like an academic exercise that they play at the Pentagon. [Laughter] Did you ever hear from anybody aside from your old bureau saying, "My God, you can't do this"?

LAISE: I think there were real problems back here in dealing with this situation. Sure, the bureau spoke up. I know that, but Kissinger wouldn't have it. He tended to rely on raw data from the CIA rather than assessments of people who had served there over a period of time.

Q: Again this is just pointing this out as one of the problems within the diplomatic or foreign affairs context. Sometimes raw data which comes from the CIA sounds so much more attractive and you feel that maybe this has a greater validity than people who are sitting there, essentially reading the newspapers, talking to the people, etc. Their balance of the overt side sometimes is overwhelmed by the covert side, particularly operators who are back in Washington. They feel they have their control on something that nobody else knows about. It's dangerous.

LAISE: I think it is because the raw data basically needs to be put in context. In this case I think it was not. The source was considered very good and, therefore, Indian attentions were regarded as of great concern here in Washington. That's why they acted.

Q: Now did the Nepalese feel about both the Bangladesh war and the American tilt towards Pakistan?

LAISE: Nepal is in the same position as every other small country surrounding India. Their basic concern is India. As you know, right now the Indians are almost strangling them with being unwilling to let goods go through to Nepal. The Nepalese are now without salt, without POL, without some of the necessities of life because the only way anything gets into Nepal—a landlocked country—is through India. India is using that to its advantage to get some political concessions—I don't know what, and neither do the Nepalese, I gather. The point is that the Nepalese tend to be very cautious in their relationship with the Indians but very sympathetic with their other neighbors because all of them feel the Indians increasingly flexing their muscles.

Q: I wonder if we could talk a bit about the relations between Nepal and China while you were there in 1966 to 1973.

LAISE: My impression during that period of time is that the China-Nepal relations were cordial. China conducted itself largely on a government to government basis. They had an AID program and bought a lot of good will by building roads in Nepal. They built a road from the Tibetan border to Kathmandu and then they built a road from Kathmandu to Koch Bihar and it was very much a turn-key project. They actually came in and did it. The Nepalese themselves are not very much involved. Of course, this created strains between India and Nepal. India wanted to make sure that the Chinese were not operating anywhere near the Indian border and they always sought to make sure that the Chinese contribution to Nepal was the least sensitive politically as possible. Nepal was constantly very conscious of this tension and sought to benefit from the Chinese relationship, using it as a point of pressure and leverage on India but recognizing the limitations. I believe, from the intelligence we had as well as what the Nepalese were telling us, that the Chinese were counseling the Nepalese to maintain good relations with India and not to consider that, if they got into trouble with India, China was going to rescue them in any way. You

can imagine, Tibet is much more of a problem for China than Nepal, and they certainly were not wanting to provoke something in Nepal which would cause them to have to extend their operations through Tibet to Nepal. Of course, Nepal was not at the stage of development where the Chinese were investing very much in the Chinese wing of the Communist Party.

Q: During the period that you were there, we went through some major changes in our attitude towards China. We were thinking of China as being an expansionist country —all communist countries by definition were expansionists and were preying on their neighbors. This was a keystone of our whole policy until the opening of the door to China again. Before the Nixon visit to China, what were we telling the Nepalese about China and relations with China?

LAISE: Our stance was pretty clearly lined out in several of Henry Kissinger's or the President's report to Congress on the state of the world. Our interest, and certainly the posture that I took in Nepal, was in regional stability in that area and, therefore, the self-reliance and the orderly development of Nepal we considered to be in our interests because it was a way of sustaining balance in the region. I made it very clear that our interests in Nepal were identical with Nepal's own interests, that is, to maintain its independence and contribution to regional stability. We were the major non-aligned country in Nepal. [Laughter]

Q: Did the members of the Nepalese government or the king come to you from time to time to chat about this?

LAISE: Their great concern from the beginning of my period of time was that their concern that we would see Nepal through Indian eyes and not see it as Henry Kissinger put it in the reports to the Congress as an important strategic geopolitical area for maintaining balance in that area between China and India.

Q: Nepal seemed to play a fairly active role in international politics in its relations. It seemed to want to extend itself beyond being just a small mountainous kingdom. Did you have this feeling?

LAISE: We encouraged them that their role could be a constructive role in the international scene. They rely very heavily on the United Nations as the guarantor of their independence, and they wanted to make sure everybody in the U. N. knew where Nepal was and what its problems were so that if anything should happen from India or China, they could count on support in the United Nations. So they played an active role in the United Nations. They contributed troops to peacekeeping forces. We encouraged them in that. As you know, the Gurkhas are world famous as fighters and so that was a constructive role for them to play. We encouraged them in doing so.

Q: You must have been involved with securing votes from the Nepalese in the United Nations voting process on issues which often had no immediate concern to Nepal. How did you find this work?

LAISE: Generally, Nepal understood and were helpful to the extent that they could be helpful. They were members of the non-aligned group but they were not all that vocal, and very often on important votes they did support our position. The one area, of course, where they did not—but that was not surprising—was our continued drive to prevent the People's Republic of China from being represented in the U. N. Always they took a balanced point of view and it wasn't balanced against us. It wasn't necessarily balanced for us, but basically they have been cooperative in the U. N.

Q: Did you find the powers that be in the Department of State were appreciative of Nepal's role and were not pushing you to get them to do more things than you felt was prudent?

LAISE: No. As a matter of fact, I think our relationship was a remarkably harmonious one between a big power and a small power. When I remember the state visit of the King of

Nepal here in 1967 and President Johnson, I understand from people in the White House, enjoyed the visit. First of all, it was a beautiful time of the year, the first of November, and he is one of the few people who came to visit the President who didn't ask him for anything. [Laughter] He was inclined to be very considerate. I think it's true throughout Washington, whether in the Executive Branch or the Legislative Branch, there is a natural sympathy for Nepal because of the feeling of having to live as a neighbor dominated by India. Their problems are understandable and one basically has a natural sympathy for their situation.

Q: Did the United Kingdom have a special relationship. Even in today's paper there's a mention of the use of the Gurkhas, etc. as troops. Did you find that the British ambassador was a particularly powerful person in Nepal or not?

LAISE: When I was there it seemed to me the most important presence that they cultivated and attached significance to was the American presence. It was manifested in the form of economic assistance, but Nepal chose to interpret that as having a political importance as well. England did have a special relationship in the sense that not only the past so much but the fact that—after all, let's remember that Nepal is one of only two countries in Asia that was not occupied by a foreign power, Nepal and Thailand. The British had a political representative there but they never occupied Nepal. So Nepal was always considered to be an independent and free country and not having been occupied by a foreign power. The British had great admiration for the fighting quality of the Gurkhas, and to this day they sustain a Gurkha regiment. In principle it was agreed, while I was there, that the regiment would be phased out because a self-respecting country doesn't like to consider itself providing mercenaries for a foreign power. So it was agreed in principle that this would be phased out, but the British way of dealing of this problem is so experienced and diplomatic that in fact what happened—because really the Nepalese didn't want to lose the hard currency represented by this—was that the phase-out would be gradual. Well it's never happened although in principle it was agreed that it would. It serves the purpose of both countries to continue it. In the case of Britain, with all their troubles in Northern Ireland

which makes a heavy call on their other troops, they use the Gurkhas where they can use them and need them. In the case of the Nepalese, it's hard currency that they need, so it's a mutually convenient arrangement.

Q: Also, the Gurkhas are a very powerful propaganda tool for the Nepalese because Nepal is really known because of the history and fame of its troops. Otherwise, it would be another Bhutan or something like that. [Laughter]

LAISE: They have helped establish the fame of Nepal and that's perfectly true. The other thing is that the British have handled it very well. When I was there, they continued to return to the country. They didn't become expatriates. The British handled the whole operation extremely well. The British royalty continue to be a model for the way in which the Nepalese royalty conduct themselves and so there is a special tie because of the two royal families. It's a tie of importance in many respects because the British know how to handle royalty so they have the respect of the Nepalese. I don't think their power position is the equivalent of ours in the larger game, but they exercise a very, very useful role.

Q: How did the war in Vietnam play in Nepal? We're talking about the period of 1966 to 1973, and for a good part of this time your husband, Ambassador Bunker, was in Vietnam. How did the Nepalese government and king view our war there?

LAISE: I have the impression that they were very worried when Ambassador Bunker went to Vietnam and they were fearful that we would exert pressure on them to play a role in Vietnam. As you can imagine, American generals would have been delighted to have had Gurkhas down in Vietnam. At no time was any suggestion ever made of this and there was no pressure exerted on the Nepalese government either from Washington or by us in this regard. Therefore, the Nepalese reciprocated by equal restraint and they never made any adverse comment about our involvement in Vietnam. Indeed, when the Tet offensive occurred in 1968, they were terribly concerned on a personal basis about Ambassador Bunker. So they showed very great personal concern for him. To the extent there was any

discussion with anyone who understood the larger problems, I think that I can be correct in saying that they were sad to see us bogged down there because they considered our role extremely important in Asia. I'm not sure that they agreed with out method of achieving our goals, but they were sympathetic to our goals. As I say, they exercised restraint in never being critical.

Q: You weren't called upon to put any particular pressure on them.

LAISE: No, not at all.

Q: During the period of the "flower children," were you involved with dealing with them coming to Nepal and living a different life, particularly getting involved with drugs, hashish, and things of this nature?

LAISE: When I went there, Kathmandu is the place to be on the hippie trail. There certainly were a lot there, but I didn't get terribly involved. The consular section on the whole could handle it because, essentially, it was once analyzed as we were thinking about this, to get to Kathmandu Americans have to cross an ocean whichever way you look at it. It meant that they had some financial backing or support somewhere at home, unlike the Europeans who could drive to Kathmandu and arrive penniless and be very much of a problem for their embassies. In our situation, usually you could work it out with families and things like that. It was not for us as large a problem as it was for some of the European embassies.

Q: Was the problem spread around throughout enough of the other nations so that the Nepalese didn't look upon the Americans as being a particularly dissolute group of people, or did they look upon this as being an occidental problem?

LAISE: I think it was fairly international. The same was true when it came to stealing and being involved in illegal smuggling of art objects out of Nepal. I'm glad to say the American Embassy was never involved. It was much more of the French—

Q: What was this? You mean other embassies' personnel themselves were involved?

LAISE: They may or may not have been embassy personnel but citizens of those countries. The finger was much more pointed at them than at us because there are great art treasures in the Kathmandu Valley. It's an open-air museum. Things like this [pointing to some statues] are very much in demand. We're a great suction point, and no doubt a lot of this has ended up in America but it came through Europe. In Kathmandu itself it was the Europeans who were much more suspect than the Americans.

Q: There was a visit there by the then Vice President Spiro Agnew in 1970. How did that go? This must have been the highest level person to ever go there.

LAISE: It was indeed. It went very well. The Nepalese were delighted to have such a high-level visitor from the United States. It had a lot of interesting developments in connection with it. As you can imagine, the security arrangements for a vice presidential visit are about the same as for a presidential visit. So we had an advance team that came out well before Christmas and spent Christmas with us. They wanted to change everything around to suit the public relations requirements here in the United States, but the reception at the airport area was not one where you got the best light for pictures. They wanted to change the area for the reception. They also wanted to make a sweep of the palace and all the palace environments before the Vice President went there for a meeting with the king. In each case, the Nepalese were very skillful in evading their demands. [Laughter] It got very contentious there at the end when the Nepalese were refusing to let our security people go in to the palace quarters.

I kept trying to assure them that they were going to get in before the Vice President went, but they were doing a lot of remodeling and fixing things up. They were going to wait until that was finished. They were going to show us their last problems in remodeling as a matter of pride. The impatience of our security people was just very, very obvious to the

point of threatening that they would go in with guns fore and aft if they didn't get a chance to sweep the place.

The king's military advisor had assured me that they would get in at the right time and they did get in at the right time. The Nepalese very calmly did things their own way, and all this fuss and feathers that our people put up in quite a stew was ignored. Eventually, it all worked itself out.

I was fairly confident because I readily detected on the part of the king, who was then King Mahendra, the father of the present king, that since he was staging a wedding for his son shortly thereafter, the methodology that we were using to provide security to plan the thing, the detail with which we had planned—he was fascinated with it—he basically looked upon this as a dry run for what he was going to have to put on a few months later in the way of a wedding to provide security for visiting heads of state and other royal families and to educate his people in how to do these things. They were thoroughly cooperative. It wasn't that they were being uncooperative with us. It was just that their timetable and their pride in doing things right meant that they weren't going to expose themselves to criticism from us by a premature view of what they were doing.

I've been in other state visits like this, and to me it was remarkably lacking in friction with the host government considering the way our security people act.

Q: I think this is one of the elements that is often forgotten about in state visits. There can be a great deal of underlying tension because of both the impatience and the arrogance of our security people.

LAISE: The demands of our security people.

Q: Often the embassy gets caught in between and tries to balance both sides out with not always the greatest success. Although there are a lot of smiling faces on those of the

dignitaries, underlying that there are an awful lot of hard feelings by people with whom you are going to be left to work with.

LAISE: That is correct. I remember a visit of President Carter to India. Of course, the Indians are very proud and very competent. The notion that the Americans were going to dictate to the Indians how they had to protect their President in the president of India's own house was an absolute insult, and as you say, total arrogance.

A friend of mine who was a lady-in-waiting just wanted to go to the bathroom. She wasn't even allowed to go to the bathroom. She finally just told the security fellow to shove off. “This is my president's house, not yours.” [Laughter]

Q: Is there anything you'd like to add to the Nepal period of your career?

LAISE: I could talk for hours about things in Nepal that bear upon the way we sought to further our interests and the problems we ran into. There is the whole question of the validity of our economic development which was a question from the time I first went there. When I went up on the Hill for confirmation, a book had just come out on foreign aid in Nepal written by a candidate for a Ph.D. in the London School of Economics. Senator Fulbright used that as a basis for questioning me about whether aid in Nepal wasn't basically wasted and why were we doing what we were doing, etc. There still is a lot of criticism today of the amount of foreign aid going into Nepal and propping up a regime which is not being as attentive to some of the economic and political reforms that are desirable. Indeed, the World Bank has got a structural agreement with them to try to induce some reforms as a requirement for further assistance from the bank and its consortium of foreign donors. So there is the whole issue of economic development in a small country like this.

The second thing is the management of our own relationships in a climate where there is the rivalry between the Indians and the Chinese and the suspicion on the part of both concerning our role. This happened when I was there and is happening right now. India

decided to use its trade and transit arrangements with Nepal in the renegotiation of them as a leverage to get Nepal to make political concessions to India that India felt were essential to its security. Nepal absolutely resisted. Our role in a thing like this is limited but important.

Q: Let's talk about the role of the United States as you performed it and saw it at the time in the India-Nepalese relationship.

LAISE: The evolution of our relationship in Nepal in relationship to India has been very interesting. Certainly, we alienated India in going into a military pact with Pakistan. Over the years our relationship with India since 1952 has matured and developed for a period of time into a more trusting relationship. We gave a vast amount of economic assistance to India and out of this grew a working relationship which was very effective. I think we contributed mightily to the economic development and the [green revolution] of India, even though on all the issues of political importance to India we always seemed to be a different side.

Nevertheless, in relationship to Nepal in the period when Ellsworth was ambassador to India and when I was actually in the embassy in India, the relationship was such that we negotiated with the Indian government an arrangement whereby we would use blocked currencies generated from PL 480 rupees for an economic program in Nepal. In effect, this meant that since the major balance of payments problem for Nepal was Indian rupees, most of their imports came from India. Our rupee aid program was a way of helping them meet that balance of payments problem. It was done because Nepal was part of the common market of India. India welcomed our assistance in keeping Nepal looking south instead of north to China. So there was that degree of cooperation between us in Nepal that was not always evident in larger issues.

When we made the opening to China in 1971, the Indians saw that as changing sides, so to speak. They became much more concerned about our role in Nepal. As you know, they

signed a friendship treaty with Russia growing out of that whole 1971 period. The Indo-Pak war, the so-called American tilt towards Pakistan, and the opening to China, all of these events caused a shift in the perception in Nepal of the great power relationships. It was seen that India and the Soviet Union were in collusion and that we and the Chinese were more friendly. I kept sustaining the position in Nepal that we were the only non-aligned country and, therefore, our interests totally coincided with Nepal's interest in Nepal.

It wasn't easy to persuade the Indians of that or, of course, the Soviets, but it meant that it was very important in how we carried out our work there so that our actions coincided with our words and that we were not pro anybody. We were pro Nepal and pro U. S.

That was the way I sought to sustain our position and the clarity of our position in Nepal. I always made it a point to make it clear both to the Nepalese—I was not speaking out of two sides of my mouth. I spoke this way to the Nepalese and I spoke the same way to the Indian ambassador. All the time I was there the Indian ambassador was people that I knew. I sought to make it perfectly clear that our interests in Nepal were not contrary to the Indian interests either and that they were kept informed as to what we were doing. After all, India has a major interest in Nepal that involves Indian security. They have a right to be concerned. We are very far away and Nepal is not that important in terms of our national interest, and it makes no sense whatsoever for us to conduct a policy that doesn't take account of India's interests as well.

Q: Did you find yourself keeping the Indian ambassador pretty much informed of what you were doing?

LAISE: Yes. I made it a policy because I genuinely believed that what we were doing was as much in the Indian interest as it was in Nepal and the U. S.

Q: How about with our AID program? Were we careful to make sure that the Indians knew what we were doing [since] we were using their money?

LAISE: That was the other thing that I had to do during my period of time which was to prepare the Nepalese. I didn't appreciate it until later how much they felt that our having a rupee aid program contributed to our looking at Nepal through Indian eyes. Politically, they seemed to attach more importance to having a dollar aid program. What they didn't know was how much more difficult it was for them to meet the terms of a dollar aid program than it was for a rupee program. [Laughter]

Q: You're talking about not only the paperwork but also the preparation and the reporting.

LAISE: I'm talking about the requirements for it where we would have congressmen and senators coming there concerned about our balance of payments. If they saw we were spending rupees which they felt was a dwindling asset of ours anyway for agriculture, education and health in Nepal, they thought, “Great. That's a fine way to use money that would otherwise lose value. It isn't a drain on our dollar resources and it is more power.” They were less inclined to press for aid programs to meet political requirements of the U. S. than in where we were spending rupees.

In the case of a switch over to a dollar program, they were competing with other countries around the world. They weren't competing with anyone for the rupee program so they were having an international competition for funds. The projects had to stand up to certain political and domestic requirements of the U. S. and have it more closely monitored from the standpoint of our standards and not necessarily whether it related to the local situation quite so much. In that regard, there was less money available and higher standards [were] demanded of performance. They were not used to this. The important thing was to try to educate them to realize that, when they switched from a rupee program which we had to do in the wake of the developments between us and India and we ceased our rupee program altogether in Nepal—preparing the Nepalese for the difference in requirements was also a part of my task.

Q: How did you find the AID personnel who were sent out to you? Was the staff about the right size? Did it tend to get too big? Did it understand the situation?

LAISE: The AID program in Nepal had pre-dated even the embassy being in Nepal. I think there were certain times when, prior to my arrival there, it was probably fairly large. I think judgment is hard to arrive at because there was no administrative infrastructure in Nepal whatsoever for governments. We were trying to help them erect some of the infrastructure of modern government and, particularly, to develop a school system, to enlarge their agricultural capabilities, and to deal with malaria and their health problems. It probably did take a lot of outside assistance to get the whole thing started and the numbers were fairly large. By the time I was there, I think on the whole we had good AID leadership.

Q: Turning back to the more political side, you were saying that there was the Nepalese-Indian- United States connection. Did you have problems with the Department of State? So often instructions are sent out for political reasons to our ambassadors on a blanket thing—go out, tell them to do this or that—not just for United Nations votes but for other things. Then comes the battle that each individual ambassador experiences and realizes that this just doesn't play here and this is counterproductive. Did you have any battles that you can think of on this nature?

LAISE: I can't think of any that I had. The classic one was with my predecessor who got the annual instruction about going to the highest authority to solicit their vote in the U. N. for excluding the communist Chinese from the United Nations vote. This is recorded in Ken Galbraith's ambassador's journal. He got the same instruction. I think it did say, “Unless, in your discretion, it's counterproductive.” He was trying to figure out what to do about it when the message from Kathmandu to Washington repeated to Delhi came in which our ambassador said, “The only person that would understand this instruction has gone to Calcutta to have his teeth fixed and I, therefore, have decided not to make the representation.” [Laughter]

Q: You left Nepal in 1973 and you came back to be in public affairs. What was your title there?

LAISE: Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

Q: You were there from 1973 to 1975 which was a particularly difficult time, I think. This was at the time of things falling apart in Vietnam and also in the United States Government, too, with Watergate.

LAISE: That's correct.

Q: You were dealing with as rabid a press corps as we have probably ever had both because of the Vietnam and Watergate issues. What were your responsibilities and where did you fit within the department?

LAISE: Although I was appointed by Secretary Rogers, by the time I took office Secretary Kissinger had already taken over. However, my appointment had been cleared with the White House. Indeed, it's my understanding this was at the time when the White House decided it wanted to take a more firm control of policy positions in the department. An effort was made to put someone in that position from the White House who would coordinate with the White House spokesman. Secretary Rogers fought it and was not going to have it, so I got the position. It was cleared in the White House, at least with Kissinger when he was still there, so that when he came into the department, it was not in contention.

As was true with other administrations, however, the press spokesman was detached from the public affairs bureau and was directly under Kissinger. Essentially, we were not dealing with the fast moving press at all. That was handled in the press office directly under Kissinger. Others have done it the same way. There's always been a controversy as to whether this is the right way to do it, but I think if you have a Secretary of State who is

very attentive to the fast moving press, it has to be somebody who can work very closely with him.

Essentially, we perceived our function and task as that which was outlined in Kissinger's hearings on the Hill. This function included developing a dialogue with the American public about foreign affairs and enhancing a greater understanding of the American public of foreign affairs. Ours was, therefore, a long-term educational process rather than influencing the fast moving press. It is my perception that, because we were not involved with the hot news, we were initially perceived as a backwater area. This gave us time to do what we thought Secretary Kissinger had set out as our goal which was developing the means by which we could enhance the dialogue with the rest of the country. We did —both in terms of publications and the methodology we developed to enable us to be more effective in our contacts with the rest of the country—manage to really come up with an exciting program. By the time Kissinger was willing to turn his attention to the rest of the country, we had developed enough knowledge about the significant areas of the country on which attention needed to be focused from Washington and some kind of better communication developed. We had developed a pattern, which is still followed to this day, of arranging for senior officials from the department go to an area using his or her time more effectively by not just being a guest on any old platform that happened to come up, but rather to enlist a network of groups to be the sponsors of the prospective speaker, to set up a meeting with significant and influential leaders in the community as well as a meeting with the doorkeepers to the media in the area, not the journalists but the doorkeepers-

Q: Who would be the “doorkeepers?”

LAISE: Publishers and T.V. station owners are the ones who basically give the policy direction to the media in the area. At the time of Watergate, one realized that our credibility in Washington really rode on Henry Kissinger. He was regarded in the country as knowing what he was doing and thoroughly competent. He himself became fascinated in interacting

with people in the country because he found that they were not trying to trap him. They really were interested in his perception of the problems we faced in the world. It was possible to have first-class exchanges with him and top officials of the department and to use their time to the best advantage of furthering understanding of our foreign policy problems and objectives. I think we really made a contribution. We certainly contributed to the education of Henry Kissinger and also contributed to the fact that he was a figure who drew respect and who was the only figurehead with credibility in Washington during Watergate.

Q: One of the things that you're mentioning here is that there is this difference between the press establishment, particularly in Washington, and some of the other. The problem with the press establishment here is that you can't get beyond looking at today's headlines. This turns into an unpleasant confrontation rather than trying to explain what you are about.

LAISE: Exactly. And that was the difference between the meetings here, where you had a lot of cynicism, and out there, where you had a real concern about knowing and they weren't confrontations. They were very worthwhile exchanges.

Q: How had this been done prior to public affairs developing this?

LAISE: There were restraints on what you can do in public affairs. The object is not propaganda for the administration. It is basically trying to make material available and to make speakers available to explain ourselves. The Congressional limitation on funds is very severe for the simple reason that they don't want it to become a propaganda operation. Some effort had been made to know the influential foreign policy groups and the centers where you could touch base with which would have a ripple effect of fielding people from here. Some effort made to understand what I would call “the road map out in the country.”

Nevertheless, the first conference I had planned Kissinger was to appear in San Francisco. I felt absolutely unprepared because, while in Nepal I would have known how best to use Henry Kissinger, what groups he should be in touch with, and who he ought to see, I didn't know that—nor did anybody else in the State Department know that—about California.

Q: This is, of course, a prop of the State Department. We are trained to work abroad. Whom could you call upon?

LAISE: I had some first class deputies, one of whom joined me when I went there. This was Charlie Bray. He had been the spokesman for Bill Rogers and resigned, but he was very knowledgeable about the task that had to be done to meet the challenge that Kissinger threw down on the Hill. Working with people like him, the first thing I did was that Georgetown set up a seminar to examine some of our problems of what we had to do if we wanted to really be in touch with the groups, and through these local groups, reach out more intelligently in the dialogue on foreign policy. I started with the seminar arranged at Georgetown and then I went prior to these meetings to the cities involved. Then I enlisted people at the Council on Foreign Relations, people in the department who knew California which was a sensitive area for Kissinger to go to at that time. It was Nixon's home state and he could not be captured or blind sided by people who had political interests or agendas of their own. The main thing was to figure out the road map there well enough to know who could be the convener that would be neutral. We just reached out and got people to help us work on thing, and then we did it wherever subsequently we scheduled things. By this time we began to build up an understanding of where the important groups that could be assembled to create a platform where we were not the captive of somebody else's agenda. My impression was that, before that, in the case of Kissinger it was easy because he had more bids coming in constantly for coming to speak whereas other secretaries of state who were not necessarily good speakers and as much in demand we were reactive and scrambling around trying to find the platform that would be appropriate

but basically being responsive rather than proacting. I think I can say that we changed the Bureau of Public Affairs from being a reactive bureau to other people's agenda out there. We tried to make it proactive, that the time of people and the product that we were producing in the way of speeches reached the consumers that would pay some attention to it, needed it, and then could use it to good advantage. Q: What were the main lines that we were interested in promulgating at this particular time? Vietnam was going down. Watergate was there but our foreign policy interests remained major.

LAISE: For one thing, answer questions and put it in perspective. My impression is that we were not peddling any line. Kissinger was seeking to develop a new consensus in America about our role in the world and that simply did not rely on anti-communism. The American consensus which held so long after World War II around the containment policy and anti-communism began to fall apart as a result of Vietnam, he was essentially seeking to educate on the necessity for seeing the world as involving more complexity and ambiguity. Obviously, the focus of much that he was addressing was the Soviet relationship and the European relationships. The Bureau of Europe came at that time, if you remember. Depending on where we were, if it were in the South it might be focused on our Latin American policy. It was global in terms of the subject matter covered and very often in relationship to the location and the interests of the area where we were holding meetings.

At this juncture I don't remember precise subjects without going back over the agendas.

Q: How did you view the Office of the Historian?

LAISE: I view it as very important and a neglected asset of the department. Operating officials and I myself have to confess that we tend to ignore the resource that is available in the historical division. I suppose that the major effort that was being made during my tenure was to try to move forward the reclassification schedules in order that the historical division's publications could be more timely.

Q: Has an attempt been made to get any oral history such as we're doing now?

LAISE: No.

Q: The use of history for foreign affairs has often been neglected.

LAISE: I quite agree. I certainly was interested in it having and being more up to date and enabling it to make a better contribution, but I have to confess that the oral history—

Q: The money isn't there—

LAISE: That's the problem.

Q: I think one of the things we are hoping as this whole series goes on that eventually your discussion of your work at various times will get distilled and go back to operating officers. It's not only for just researchers and diplomatic history but for operating officers to take a look to see where we've been and what we've done. Sometimes there's something to be gained by it rather than starting out anew each time.

We come to a very important position that you were given. During part of this period you were my boss. I was with the Board of Examiners. How did you get the assignment as Director General of the Foreign Service from 1975 to 1977?

LAISE: How did I get? I don't know. I think some of the shifts in the department that Kissinger and Eagleburger discussed as being necessary resulted in my coming up as a candidate for the director general. So they approached me as to whether I would be willing to undertake it. What they did not know, I am sure, was that I had a background in personnel administration. [Laughter] Purely coincidental.

Q: How did you react to this proposal?

LAISE: With some reservation, but on the other hand it was an area that I knew something about. Generally, in Foreign Service assignments I would, as I did when I went to Nepal as ambassador, state the pros and cons but indicated I would be willing to follow whatever the secretary or the President wanted me to do as a Foreign Service officer where I could be most helpful. That's the stance I took.

Q: The Director General of the Foreign Service is a role that could be unclear to somebody who is not very familiar with the Department of State. What did the work consist of at this period of time?

LAISE: The role of the director general has never been what was conceived to be in the Rogers Act of 1924. It originally was to have been somebody to run the Foreign Service independently of even the Secretary of State Dean Acheson.

Q: It was to be somewhat akin to the British system.

LAISE: Yes, and Dean Acheson wouldn't have it. My impression is, and I really haven't gone into the history of it, that the role of the director general changed quite a lot depending on the incumbent and whoever was in the management position. When you had a very strong person like Loy Henderson in the management position, the role of the director general might be less significant. When I came in it seemed to me that the role was totally misnamed and I really did not think it made sense to incorporate a symbolic role in the Foreign Service Act of 1980. In actual fact, the director general is nothing more than the Assistant Secretary of State for Personnel Administration, period. The political clout and influence is in the job of Under Secretary for Management. The notion that you represent the Foreign Service was very quickly denied to me by the head of AFSA, the American Foreign Service Association, the bargaining agent under the developments in the 1950s and 1960s. Tom Boyatt made it very clear to me that they represented the Foreign Service on policy issues with management. They expected me to weigh in with management on behalf of the Service but I didn't have a constituency behind me to

give that very much weight since it was basically in AFSA's hands. To me it was a total anomaly that the notion that the director general had any special position other than just another Assistant Secretary of State for Personnel Administration.

Q: The title does not really give the true flavor. From outside it would appear that the Director General of the Foreign Service would be the top professional with all that that implies.

LAISE: It implies that you run the Foreign Service. Not any more, if you ever did.

Q: Of course, too, the Foreign Service has changed in that the Wriston Program of the early 1950s it used to be that it was the Foreign Service that basically served abroad and the Civil Service worked within the Department of State. They really were two quite different branches. That was amalgamated and probably since that time the whole power of the director general has been diluted anyway.

LAISE: I think the function of the director general is personnel administration.

Q: What were the principal problems that you saw in personnel that you had to deal with?

LAISE: The basic problem, and it still exists today in many respects although the Foreign Service Act of 1980 did clarify things—when I arrived there I appointed a group of very able people to make a survey throughout the department as to what our problems were. They did a first class job and the report on the agenda of what needed to be done while I was there was submitted to Kissinger and he approved our moving ahead on all the recommendations. That memorandum I still think is very good and I keep it. Essentially, the problem was that an effort made under William Crockett in the 1960s to move all of the Department of State personnel into the Foreign Service system which failed because legislation to support it did not go through. Nevertheless, they sought to accomplish as much as they could administratively. When you try to move domestic personnel into a Foreign Service system, you have to make so many exceptions so that when I got there

we didn't have a system or consistent policies because we had made so many exceptions. It was quite a muddle. One of the initial studies that I instituted was calling in both people from outside and inside the department on what kind of a system was necessary to meet our needs. It was very clear to everybody that we had to use all of our authorities and recognize that we had a need for a Foreign Service system and a need for a Civil Service system. The two had to be run separately. You couldn't try to run them under the same system. Otherwise, your discipline of insisting on worldwide mobility and then making so many exceptions because you had domestic people in your system broke down, as indeed it did. It was written into the Foreign Service Act. This was one of the major structural problems that I sought to deal with was recognizing that we had a need for a home service and a foreign service.

Basically, the reason it was possible when I came in—and the reason that an effort was made to cram it all into the Foreign Service system—was to get authority over personnel released from the Civil Service Commission and in the hands of the department because the Civil Service Commission and system was too rigid and didn't permit the degree of discretion we felt we needed to have as an agency. With the Civil Service Reform Act coming into being in the Carter Administration, and it was already on the horizon before that, there was a lot more decentralization of authority to the agencies. That made it easier for us to live within a system where part of our personnel would be Civil Service and part would be Foreign Service.

Q: Part of the basic problem was the inability to move people from one job to another, wasn't it?

LAISE: I think it was perceived that it was the difficulty of moving people. It was rank and position and not rank and person. That's why you couldn't move them. They were tied to the position. Getting rid of people you felt were incompetent was so much more difficult. That was the perception, at least certainly a part of it.

At the same time we destroyed a lot of our expertise because a lot of jobs today don't have a Foreign Service component. A lot of people we need in the department, whether in arms control, computers, historians, or economists, don't want to be cycled through the Foreign Service system as generalists. They want to rise in a specialty and be absolutely " A number one" and we need them as "A number one" if we're going to have any policy influence in this town. We need to have a system that rewards specialists as well as generalists.

Q: Were you fighting just a system that was all muddled or were you fighting organized pressure groups, too?

LAISE: There was very strong resistance within the administrative side of the department of reverting back to the concept of Civil Service separately from the Foreign Service.

Q: What was the resistance about?

LAISE: I think a lot of the reasons that existed for a single system in the minds of a lot of people was that people who were not part of the Foreign Service officer corps were regarded as second-class citizens. So putting people in these specialists categories into the system—you plastered across their foreheads they were Foreign Service officers and that gave them status. The notion that somehow or another you would revert to recognizing specialists and not necessarily making them Foreign Service officers was to revert to the second-class citizen.

Q: You were on the spot at the time when AFSA, the equivalent to the Foreign Service union, was really beginning to show its muscle. I think it has actually gone down now. How were your relations with AFSA?

LAISE: We were dealing with a very lively organization, as you say, headed by Tom Boyatt at the time.

Q: Tom Boyatt, by the way, has just become the head of my organization.

LAISE: Yes. I'm very well aware of that. He's a very feisty fellow and a very good fighter. I think we had a good sparring relationship. Let's put it that way. I think many times AFSA was very helpful and I had good officers dealing with AFSA. The ones that I can think of were Nick Veliotes and Jack Scanlan. They were very effective so I think it was a healthy relationship in that sense. I do disagree fundamentally with the notion that a bargaining unit like this also has say in management policies. In other words, when AFSA became a bargaining unit, it was thought that it would be more effective if senior officials in the Foreign Service were a part of it and participated in the bargaining process. This meant bargaining about management issues. It is the only place I know in the government, and it's very unusual, that managers are part of the bargaining unit. The policies relating to executive leadership are subject to negotiations with the union. That to me is very participatory but I don't think it should be. I agree that the Foreign Service is a special sort of breed, and it is a collegial group, but I'm not sure it should be subject to the legal aspects of this that come out of the bargaining process.

Q: Was there any particular problems that this involved?

LAISE: Not at the moment.

Q: You were there during a very revolutionary period for the Foreign Service. This included the role of the spouses, especially Foreign Service wives who have often had a problem because, as we've moved into the era where it's necessary for both husband and wife to work in order to finance education or to buy a house, employment opportunities are drastically inhibited by going overseas. Did this become a problem for you?

LAISE: Yes. The establishment of the Family Liaison Unit and the beginnings of all that took place while I was there.

Q: How did this come about?

LAISE: Some of the women who had an interest in this met with some of our people and we discussed it. We sought to deal with the problem in a constructive way. I don't think that during the stage in which I was there we had moved very far along in terms of developing an organization. We were just having a dialogue about what the department might be able to do to help ease some of these problems which were clearly recognized.

Q: What about the recruitment of minorities? There was a strong push for this. I know about this since I was with the Board of Examiners at the time and there was a lot of pressure to bring more minorities, which meant blacks and to some extent Hispanics, into the Foreign Service.

LAISE: Alison Palmer started her suit in 1976. It was women and minorities. When the Carter Administration came in, they were even more dedicated to bettering the record and were willing to allocate money to try special programs.

What had happened earlier was the program of mid-level entry for women and minorities. That was instituted during my time as well as some junior programs with regard to minorities. Some efforts were well under way before the Carter Administration came in and then they gave a further push to the whole idea. There were problems connected with it. In the tendency to recruit and to lower the bars of the standards, if necessary, of people from outside, it jeopardized the opportunities for advancement of the minorities and the women already in the system. They weren't altogether so happy about this.

Q: How much of a role did the Office of Equal Opportunity play in your operation when you were there?

LAISE: They reported to the Under Secretary for Management. It depended on that individual how much of a role that they played.

Q: There's been reports in the newspaper for the past several weeks about a suit by a former Foreign Service officer, Alison Palmer, which claimed discrimination in assignments which lead to promotion and limitations of women Foreign Service officers. You've both been a part of this and also in a management role. How did you see the Service as far as opportunities for women officers prior to the suit and how have you reacted to this in your official capacity as director general at the time?

LAISE: I gave a deposition in relationship to the suit after I left. I was in it at the stage where the position of the department was upheld by the lower court. I have not been involved in it since. My own view is that the problem is not the policies. It seems to me the Foreign Service from where I sat and the fact that we were constantly from the central personnel system seeking, as our role was designed to be, to administer justice and fairness to all concerned that our policies were not the problem. You know as well I, since you worked in personnel, that there is continuous emphasis given in the central personnel system to the importance of better opportunities for minorities and for women. A great deal of stress was put on it.

I think that where the breakdown has occurred is in the practices. I don't think the breakdown was in the practices of the central personnel system. It's very difficult for a central personnel system in an agency such as the Department of State to influence the operations and the choices of the geographic bureaus and the senior personnel. While we can propose people as we do for higher assignment that keep these policies in mind, the individual preferences and prejudices of senior officials and of geographic bureaus can be controlling.

Q: This brings us to a battle that is waged again and again in the personnel system which is between a centralized personnel system, which essentially places all people, and the bureaus which make specific personnel requests with the backing of the respective ambassador. How was this battle fought during the time you were there?

LAISE: That was going on all the time. After all, the role of a central personnel system is to try to balance the requirements of the best person for the job and the best job for the individual. In other words, we have a responsibility as central personnel system to all the career people. That's why I'm saying that the element of fairness and justice is a very important factor in the position that the central system has to take. We have to balance those two sometimes contradictory factors—the best job for the individual and best individual for the job. It's a constant bureaucratic struggle that goes on because, as you say, the operating bureaus have a very strong say in making selections and so do top officials. One just has to continue to battle for fairness from the central system. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose.

Q: Did you find yourself being caught by having to make cases for assignments that the centralized personnel system were necessary for the Service as opposed as the desires of a bureau?

LAISE: You had to pick your cases. Wherever we could make a good one, we did. I have a very strong recollection of several cases, one involving an assignment for an aide to one of the top officials in the department where they sought a directed assignment and the directed assignment was totally contrary to the general policies we were following.

Q: A directed assignment would be directing a specific individual to be sent to a specific place.

LAISE: I fought that one successfully as being neither in the interest of the Service or in the interest of the individual. The other case was again a female where resistance was to a deputy chief of mission assignment. We succeeded in pulling it off. The system went to battle regularly.

Q: One of the keys is, as mentioned in the suit and also since both of us are professional Foreign Service officers we are aware, that the road to success normally is through the political specialization.

LAISE: That's not true.

Q: There are other ways, but at least to become an ambassador often is either political or economic, with weight maybe more on the political.

LAISE: No, a lot of our good economic officers have done very well.

Q: Before that, to be a deputy chief of mission once or twice is part of the normal course. The claim has been, and just from looking at it over the years I think it's justified, that not many women at least prior to now have gone through the deputy chief of mission slot often because the ambassador has indicated he would rather not have a woman.

LAISE: One of the rules is the ambassador has a right to choose his or her alter ego.

Q: Did you feel this was a problem when you were there?

LAISE: Of course, it was a problem. Equally, I think it wasn't a huge problem because there weren't that many women who were valid candidates, either. Where they were a valid candidate, we did succeed in several cases and we failed in several cases.

Q: Did you have any role in preparing the lists for the ambassadors from within the State Department or was that elsewhere?

LAISE: No, there was a small committee and there still is today with the department for making career recommendations to the White House. It was usually headed by the deputy secretary.

Q: How did Henry Kissinger feel towards the Foreign Service?

LAISE: I think it is very evident that he used the Foreign Service extensively. He had sometimes fairly arbitrary views about people within the Foreign Service. Nevertheless, he relied most heavily on the Foreign Service.

Q: Were there many pressures that you felt from Congress about personnel matters when you were director general?

LAISE: I certainly was over on the Hill. I think most of the Hill contact was handled by the Under Secretary for Management.

Q: Were you getting special requests for personnel assignments?

LAISE: No. The only thing I remember is the number of times we sought to close some consulates and then we would begin to get Congressional reaction. [Laughter]

Q: Looking back on your career, what do you feel was the thing that you did that gave you the greatest satisfaction?

LAISE: I thoroughly enjoyed every stage of it and found every bit of it rewarding. Essentially, my areas of concentration were in multi-level diplomacy and the U. N. system. It was both an interesting assignment and very educational. It certainly gave me breadth of understanding of issues and relations with the Congress that the average Foreign Service officer doesn't get as well as the breadth of contacts which still remain to this day. In South Asia, India was extremely challenging. At the time, I don't know if I still do, I thought that the first secretary in the political section, which I was, was the best job in the embassy. It was high enough and in a country where a lot of Indian women didn't necessarily go out socially, and that one would have access socially to top leaders in India because of the fact that you would be invited to social occasions in which they would be present. One didn't have to do representational work except in relationship to your assignment. I didn't have to go to ribbon cutting exercises, national days of other embassies, and I had very little contact with other embassies. Since my initial major effort was in understanding

Indian internal matters, entertaining was totally in relationship to that assignment in getting to understand it better and developing relationships in the journalistic, academia, and the political worlds would give me insights about developments in India. That was interesting. I felt I had the best of both worlds there.

Needless to say, the job in Washington at the time I was there, which involved the policy management of an area where the two major countries were at war—Pakistan and India in 1965—was extremely demanding, stimulating and challenging so that portion of it, the policy end of it here in Washington, I thoroughly was engaged in and enjoyed. It was in this connection, when asked whether I wanted to go to Kathmandu, I felt that I was at a stage of the use of my skills that had been developed all these years and they would be better applied in Washington than in Kathmandu. The President decided otherwise, so I went and thoroughly enjoyed that, too. It was a wonderful assignment.

Coming back to Washington, as you can see and from what you've heard, there was an opportunity for creative effort in the Bureau of Public Affairs. The director general assignment was a very demanding one because it isn't an easy post anyway because of the need to reconcile these conflicting goals which we've already discussed. But when you also have a structural system that is not related to your needs anymore and needs some attention to basic effort there trying to get that moving, that made it especially demanding. That is when I developed high blood pressure. [Laughter]

Q: If a young person came to you today, male or female, and asked you how you would recommend the Foreign Service as a career, how would you reply?

LAISE: My reply is very simple. If you are interested in service to your country, the Foreign Service is an area of both interesting problems and an opportunity to apply oneself and get engaged in interesting problems. So long as your primary goal is service, you can work into the system—and I think there is sufficient latitude in the system—and you can find satisfaction.

If you are interested in a career and a professional specialty and you want to get to the top as fast as possible, you better go somewhere else.

Q: Madam Ambassador, I thank you very much. I've enjoyed this.

LAISE: Thank you. I've enjoyed talking to you.

End of interview